

BATHING APPARATUS

RELATED APPLICATION DATA

- [1] This application claims priority from United States Provisional Application Serial Number 60/426,580, filed November 15, 2002, entitled CHILD BATHING PAD, which application is incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

- [2] The present invention is directed toward bathing pads or supports, more particularly to a bathing pad with removable attachment suitable for use when bathing a child or infant.

BACKGROUND ART

- [3] Infants and small children are incapable of bathing themselves. Often with smaller children, it is most convenient for a care giver to bathe the child in a sink or other vessel smaller than a standard bath. Infants and small children often squirm when given baths, and can be quite slippery when they are covered with soapy water. In addition, kitchen and bathroom sinks are generally constructed with a hardened and polished surface material such as stainless steel or porcelain. It can be difficult for a parent to adequately secure a squirming infant or child during her bath as the child slides around on the slick steel or porcelain bottom surface of a sink, tub or other vessel. Serious injury can result to a small child if she slips during a bath and falls against an edge of the sink or tub.
- [4] Various devices are known in the prior art for supporting a small child during her bath, and thus creating a safer bath process. Support devices can be bath seat structures which consist of a raised ring and seat pad. The combined structure attaches to the tub or sink. The child being bathed sits within the ring, on the pad, and is in part supported by the ring. Examples of such devices are the bath seat shown in Bernstein *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 5,010,606 or the child's wide based bath seat shown in Stein, U.S. Patent No. 6,457,190. These bath seat devices are relatively complex structures with hard plastic parts which can be difficult to keep clean. In addition, a

younger infant, who is unable to sit up by herself, can not effectively and safely use a ring type bath seat.

- [5] Several sling type infant bathing devices are also known in the prior art. The sling type devices consist of a fabric sheet or platform attached to or suspended across the bathing vessel. A key feature of the sling type bathing devices is that these devices are designed to suspend the baby at or above the waterline during a bath. A typical sling type device is taught in Keister, U.S. Patent Number 5,491,850, where a hammock type support system installable in a conventional bathtub is specifically designed to support an infant in a prone position at or above the water level during a bath. The infant being bathed in a sling type device is held safely above the water, but is unfortunately deprived of the ability to splash and play in the bathwater during a bath.
- [6] Alternatively, resourceful parents have used a washcloth or towel as a pad between the infant being bathed and the surface of the bath tub or sink. A washcloth or towel used in this fashion provides a measure of comfort to the infant who is no longer sitting directly on a cold, slick surface. The washcloth however is still free to slide about the sink or tub and does not significantly enhance the safety of the infant. The present invention is directed toward overcoming one or more of the problems discussed above.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- [7] The present invention is a bathing apparatus for use in a bathing vessel consisting of a flexible sheet and attachment means for attaching the flexible sheet to a surface of a bathing vessel. The flexible sheet is attached such that it is substantially in contact with the surface of the bathing vessel. In addition, connecting means are provided which removably connect the attachment means to the flexible sheet.
- [8] Preferably, the flexible sheet of the bathing apparatus is made with a non-slip surface such as terry cloth or other fabric toweling type material. In addition, it is preferable that the flexible sheet be manufactured from a machine washable fabric. Typically, the flexible sheet will be rectangular in shape and the attachment means can be connected to the flexible sheet at each corner of the rectangle.
- [9] In alternative embodiments, the flexible sheet may have a padded portion. The padded portion can be centrally located with respect to the flexible sheet or,

alternatively, the padded portion can be located around a perimeter of the flexible sheet.

[10] The attachment means may be a suction cup, a magnet, or other means of detachably attaching the flexible sheet to a surface of the bathing vessel. The connecting means can be as simple as a flexible strap tied in a loop or may be a relatively complex assemblage of buttons, snaps, or links.

[11] Also disclosed are a method of manufacturing a bathing apparatus for use in a bathing vessel as described above.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[12] Fig. 1 is a perspective view of the child bathing pad of the present invention;

[13] Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the child bathing pad of the present invention in use in a typical kitchen sink;

[14] Fig. 3 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention having padded sides;

[15] Fig. 4 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention having a padded seating area; and

[16] Fig. 5 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention having extended sides.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[17] Fig. 1 illustrates a preferred embodiment of the bathing apparatus 1. The bathing apparatus 1 includes an appropriately sized flexible sheet 2 upon which an infant or other person will be sat for bathing. The flexible sheet 2 is preferably constructed of terrycloth or a similar non-slip and machine washable material. Non-slip is defined for the purposes of this disclosure as a material which has surface characteristics which render a wet infant placed upon the non-slip material less likely to slide than if placed on an unprotected porcelain bathing vessel surface. The flexible sheet 2 is secured for use to the bottom of a sink, bathtub or other vessel by an attachment structure 3. In Fig. 1 the attachment structure 3 is depicted as several suction cups, but other types of attachment structures such plastic coated magnets, adhesive pads, padded weights,

Velcro™ or clips could be utilized as well. The attachment structure 3 is affixed to the flexible sheet 2 by means of a removable attachment device which can be a strap 4. The strap 4 is looped through a channel 5 in the attachment structure 3 and further looped through a pair of slots 6 in the flexible sheet 2. The strap 4 is connected into a securing loop. The strap can be simply tied to form a loop, or the loop can be formed by means of closures 7. In Fig. 1 the closures 7 are depicted as snaps, however, other closures such as hook and loop fasteners, buttons, Velcro™ or clips could be used to secure the strap 4 in a loop configuration.

[18] The flexible sheet 2 can be fabricated in any appropriate size ranging from relatively small washcloth sized surfaces designed for bathing small infants in small sinks to full bath towel sized surfaces for bathing large children or even adults in a full sized bathtub. In addition, the flexible sheet 2 can be made in gender appropriate colors or with various decorations.

[19] Fig. 2 depicts the bathing apparatus 1 as described above in use in a typical kitchen sink. As shown in Fig. 2, the flexible sheet 2 of the bathing apparatus 1 is sized appropriately and attached such that the flexible sheet 2 is substantially in contact with a surface of the bathing vessel, typically the bottom surface. The attachment structure 3, which is depicted as a suction cup, facilitates the efficient placement and removal of the bathing apparatus 1 when necessary as the bathing vessel is used for purposes other than bathing an infant. Although not depicted in Fig. 2, the bathing apparatus 1 can alternatively be attached to a countertop or a floor to provide a safe no slip surface for drying an infant or child after her bath.

[20] Periodically, when washing of the bathing apparatus 1 is necessary, the attachment structures 3 can be removed from the flexible sheet 2 by untying the loop of strap 4 or disconnecting the closures 7 and removing the strap 4 from the slots 6. After removal of the attachment structures 3, the flexible sheet 2 can be hand laundered or washed in a typical household washing machine.

[21] Fig. 3 shows an alternative embodiment of the bathing apparatus 1', with like elements from the embodiments of Figs. 1 and 2 identified with a prime ('). In the embodiment of Fig. 3, where the flexible sheet 2' has padded contoured sides 8 which enhance the ability of the bathing apparatus 1' to safely secure a small child, and

protect her from bumps if she does fall over. Preferably, the flexible sheet 2' will be constructed as a machine washable fabric pocket containing internal padding which forms the contoured sides 8. A zipper or other suitable closure can be included in the flexible sheet 2' to allow the easy removal of the interior padding and washing of the flexible sheet 2'.

[22] Fig. 4 depicts a third embodiment, with like elements from the embodiments of Figs. 1 and 2 identified with a double prime (""). In the embodiment of Fig. 4 the central seating portion 9 of the flexible sheet 2' is padded.

[23] Fig. 5 depicts another embodiment where the sides 10 of the flexible sheet 2" are extended to allow covering of the side walls of the sink or tub. This extended embodiment can also feature padding. In all embodiments, the flexible sheet 2 is placed substantially in contact with a surface of the bathing vessel.